

NATIONAL EMIGRATION AND WELFARE POLICY FOR OVERSEAS PAKISTANIS

Processes, Challenges and
Responses for Action

Policy Brief

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**IMPROVING MIGRATION
MANAGEMENT** IN THE **SILK ROUTES**

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This Policy Brief explains the methodology, process, key features and recommendation outlined in the National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis. The Policy was developed under the project "Improving Migration Management in the Silk Routes Countries" funded by the European Union and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BEOE	Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment
COD	Country of destination
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CWA	Community Welfare Attachés
EOBI	Employees Old-age Benefit Institute
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency
FSA	Foreign Service Agreement
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOP	Government of Pakistan
HEC	Higher Education Commission
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MONHSR&C	Ministry of National Health Services, Research and Coordination
MOPHRD	Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRCs	Migrant Resource Centres
NADRA	National Database & Registration Authority
NAVTTTC	National Vocational & Technical Training Commission
OPF	Overseas Pakistanis Foundation
OEC	Overseas Employment Corporation
OEPs	Overseas Employment Promoters
OPs	Overseas Pakistanis
PMDU	Prime Minister's Performance Delivery Unit
POEPA	Pakistan Overseas Employment Promoters Association
POPC	Punjab Overseas Pakistanis Commission
PPU	Policy Planning Unit
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMEDA	Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority
TEVTA	Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) finalised a “National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis” with technical and expert support from the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).¹

The Policy was drafted in the context that Pakistan has more than forty years of experience of placing its workers in overseas labour markets through strong institutions, an established legislative framework (1979 Rules and Regulations of Emigration), and with input from key national and international stakeholders.²

This Policy Brief shows the potential benefits/impact the national policy will have on the migration process; presents a situation analysis of labour emigration from Pakistan; sets the context showing the need for an emigration policy; and outlines the process used for the drafting of the Policy. It then presents the challenges identified under each pillar of the Policy and shows an analysis of the policy responses. It also includes a section on ‘understanding the action plan’, followed by a brief discussion on the way forward.

1 The Policy has not been formally approved. To enter into force, the Policy needs approval from the higher policy forums, particularly the Federal Cabinet. The MOPHRD needs to initiate the process for its approval from relevant forums.

2 The Policy has been finalised after a thorough consultation and feedback process from relevant ministries, institutions and international organisations.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS/IMPACT THE POLICY WILL HAVE ON THE MIGRATION PROCESS

Overseas migration is a multidimensional phenomenon that requires effective cooperation among different ministries/institutions/sectors. The National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis promotes this cooperation and gives MOPHRD a leading role to coordinate with all relevant bodies, resulting in improved, integrated and efficient migration outcomes for overseas Pakistani workers as well as for the participating individuals and their families. The potential benefits of the Policy and its likely impacts on the migration process are as follows:

- The Policy interconnects three institutions/bodies associated with the MOPHRD, namely, the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) and the Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC). This interconnectivity is likely to contribute in enhancing their capacity and improving not only the emigration process but also the welfare of emigrant workers and their families left behind.
- The Policy will contribute in improving and strengthening the context of the 1979 Emigration Rules and Regulations to meet the demand of foreign employers in globally.
- The Policy will ensure that the recruitment process for overseas employment is fair and equitable, given that the Policy has comprehensively addressed the challenge of malpractices in the recruitment process.
- In order to meet the global demand for skilled workers, the Policy will recommend a framework whereby the existing skill levels of the overall labour force, particularly of intending emigrants, will be further developed and enhanced.
- The Policy will connect Pakistani institutions with global actors in the overseas migration process, including overseas employers and governments.
- The Policy will protect the rights of emigrant workers through MOUs and better engagement of Community Welfare Attaches (CWA).
- Complaints handling mechanism will be improved through effective coordination among the concerned departments.
- A visible improvement is expected in the welfare of migrant workers and their families who have been left behind.

- The engagement of the Pakistani diaspora will contribute in foreign investment and transfer of skills and technology.
- Inflows of remittances through formal banking channels will be increased.
- Through reintegration services, returning migrant workers will contribute in the Country's development efforts through their entrepreneurship.

LABOUR EMIGRATION FROM PAKISTAN: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Institutions, rules and regulations

Pakistan manages the emigration of its workforce for employment through the 1979 Emigration Ordinance, under which the BEOE was established as the regulatory body to control, facilitate and monitor the overseas migration process.³ The BEOE presently functions as a department of the MOPHRD, which is mandated to seek employment opportunities abroad for Pakistani citizens, work for the welfare of overseas workers and their families (within Pakistan as well as abroad), and coordinate with provincial governments to align the national labour laws with the Country's international obligations on labour standards. Other departments attached with MOPHRD are OPF and OEC. OPF maintains and manages a Welfare Fund and provides multiple services to overseas Pakistanis and their families residing in Pakistan. OEC, on the other hand, is the official manpower-exporting agency with a mandate to deal with the demand for Pakistani workers by foreign governments. The Government of Pakistan (GoP) also appoints CWAs at different embassies/missions abroad to facilitate overseas Pakistanis.

Recruitment processes

The 1979 Emigration Rules and Regulations give Pakistanis the right to secure overseas employment either through an overseas employment promoter (OEP), which can be public or private, through their own endeavours, or through a relative or friend working abroad. Under these rules, the BEOE is authorised to issue licenses to private OEPs and to regulate and monitor the migration of those workers who make their own arrangements (direct employment). The BEOE manages the emigration process through seven Protectorate of Emigrants Offices.⁴ As of July 2020, 2170 active licenced OEPs are associated with the Protector of Emigrants Offices (BEOE, July 2020).⁵

Placement of Pakistani workers abroad

The annual placement of Pakistani workers in overseas labour markets through regular channels has fluctuated during the last four and half decades (BEOE, 2019). The registration data managed by the BEOE shows a jump in the placement of Pakistani workers abroad during the last decade from 287,000 in 2007 to 947,000 in 2015. However, it declined to 839,000 in 2016 and 496,300 in 2017. It increased

³ The last revision in the 1979 Rules and Regulations took place in 2016.

⁴ Locations: Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi in the Province of Punjab. Karachi in the Province of Sindh. Malakand and Peshawar in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Quetta in the Province of Baluchistan

⁵ <https://beoe.gov.pk/list-of-oeps?show=active>

modestly to 625,000 in 2019. The annual growth rate of Pakistan's labour force is 3.5 percent, suggesting that there is an increase of approximately 1.5 and 2 million persons annually. The placement of Pakistani workers abroad in 2015 and 2016 was more than half of the annual addition in domestic labour force.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries⁶ remained the destination of almost all Pakistani workers who went abroad for employment during last four and half decades (96%), and unskilled workers remained the dominant category, followed by skilled, semi-skilled and highly qualified workers. Emigration of Pakistani women for employment is negligible. Between 1971 and 2018, around 58 percent of all emigrant workers went through an OEP, followed by 40 percent through their own efforts while only 2 percent used the services of OEC. The participation of workers from the Provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan in overseas employment remained relatively lower than their share in total population of the country. Pursuant to the 1979 Emigration Rules, all migrants going abroad for employment on a work visa are also enrolled as a member of OPF (thereby being entitled to OPF benefit/services for the duration of their time abroad). They can also benefit from these services for a period of three years after their permanent return to Pakistan.

Remittances, return migration and development

Pakistan is among the top ten countries in terms of inflows of remittances in the world through their nationals settled/working in other countries. Remittances in Pakistan increased to an all-time high level of about \$21.84 billion in the closing financial year of 2018-19 (GoP, 2019). More than 60 percent of those remittances came from earnings received in GCC countries. Saudi Arabia has been the largest source of remittance from overseas Pakistanis, amounting to 25 percent of total receipts. Workers' remittances in Pakistan are presently the equivalent of around 7 percent of its GDP. The contribution of foreign remittances in poverty reduction, social and economic mobility of the concerned households and human development is well documented. However, the engagement of Pakistani diaspora in development efforts of the country remains very low. Return migration is an integral part of Pakistan's temporary overseas labour migration system. Many returnees come back with exceptional skills that could be very beneficial to Pakistan. Furthermore, there are no reliable estimates about the magnitude of return migration in Pakistan.

⁶ Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is the political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman.

SETTING THE CONTEXT – THE NEED FOR POLICY AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR PAKISTAN

Pakistan needs a coherent emigration policy for the following reasons:

- The scope of overseas migration extends to sectors/institutions other than MOPHRD, for instance, the banking sector for handling inflows of remittances, the bodies dealing with foreign investment for attracting money from Pakistani diaspora, the institutions responsible for law and order to prevent malpractices in recruitment, border management authorities to control human trafficking, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Therefore, MOPHRD needs to have a policy addressing different dimensions of overseas migration, with the cooperation of relevant institutions and departments.
- Three public sector institutions dealing with overseas migration – BEOE, OPF and OEC – work according to their mandate to regulate and monitor the recruitment process, and to protect the rights of emigrant workers. However, some of the roles given to these institutions overlap, for instance, complaint-handling, welfare of migrant workers and protection of their rights while abroad. In this regard, better coordination mechanisms are required that can be addressed, monitored and managed through a well-designed Policy.
- Despite the existence of dedicated institutions, there are a number of problems prevalent in the emigration process that have also been mentioned in reported literature, raised by the media and also voiced by emigrants themselves. Concerns surround the rules and regulations for emigration of workers for employment, irregularities in the emigration process, and exploitation of migrants through high cost and poor working conditions. The emigration Policy addresses and identifies these challenges and suggests the steps to control them.
- Pakistan has struggled with finding new overseas markets for its workers. The majority of Pakistan's labour force find employment/or are sent to the Middle East region. In this regard, Pakistan's diaspora can play a critical role in bringing and introducing resources, experience, and technology to the Country. Further, they can set the impetus for providing access to foreign markets, beyond the Middle East region. At present, there is no strategy for their engagement and support.
- Pakistan has signed and ratified several international frameworks that govern labour, protection and trafficking in women and children. In this context, a Policy is required to address all these important issues.

PROCESS FOLLOWED FOR DEVELOPING THE POLICY

MOPHRD led the entire policy development process and set three key objectives at the outset: (i) promotion of safe, orderly and regular emigration; (ii) protection and welfare of emigrant workers and their families; and (iii) engagement of diaspora and reintegration of returning migrants.

With the technical assistance of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the policy development process began with a consultation meeting in July 2017, involving a number of key government and non-government stakeholders. During this consultation, MOPHRD presented its Policy outline and sought comments and feedback from the participating stakeholders.

The methodology adopted for this Policy included a mix of thematic working groups, consultations with key stakeholders and qualitative research and review of international practices. First, MOPHRD established five thematic Working Groups – each headed by a senior MOPHRD official. The Working Groups were broken down into the following categories:

- i. Labour Emigration, Protection of Overseas Workers and Inclusive Migration.
- ii. Trends in Global Labour Migration and Skills Development.
- iii. Welfare of Emigrant Workers and Overseas Pakistanis.
- iv. Promotion of Remittances through Legal Channels and Productive Uses of Remittances.
- v. Reintegration of Return Migrants.

Each Working Group was constituted to drive and reflect the direction and approach of the Policy document to cover relevant issues to be included and addressed in it. Members of the Working Groups included representatives of the concerned ministries/departments, international organisations, academia, members from key NGOs, and employers' and workers' associations. Recommendations of the five working groups were used as a key input for designing the Policy.

Second, focus group discussions (FGDs) were organised in Rawalpindi and Karachi to get feedback from potential migrants, returning migrants, and OEPs. These FGDs attracted about forty participants. This component of the methodology greatly benefitted the Policy's credibility, given how migrants are the most important stakeholders of the migration process.

Third, 20 key informants in public and private sectors were interviewed. This component added additional ownership and stakeholder involvement in the policy development process, as well as gathered a large variety of viewpoints to take under consideration.

Fourth, lessons were also drawn from international and regional experiences in developing policies for overseas migration.

Finally, MOPHRD circulated the Policy draft twice to different ministries and institutions/departments for their feedback. The draft was also shared for feedback with relevant international organisations and academia (Figure 1). The entire policy development process took over two and half years to finalise before a final draft was shared with MOPHRD.

Figure 1: Methodology adopted for the policy development process



DEFINITION OF POLICY OBJECTIVES AND RELATED CHALLENGES

Based on the input from thematic groups, key informants and FGDs, three objectives were defined:

1. Promotion of safe, orderly and fair emigration,
2. Protection and welfare of overseas Pakistanis and their families, and
3. Engagement of Pakistani diaspora in development process and reintegration of return migrants - thus covering all stages of labour emigration.

The following challenges were identified under each of the aforementioned objective:

1. Promotion of safe, orderly and regular emigration

Nine challenges were identified under this Policy pillar that can broadly be grouped into four major issues:

- vi. expansion of overseas employment opportunities for Pakistani workers;
- vii. ensuring 'safe, orderly and regular' emigration of workers;
- viii. creating equal overseas employment opportunities for all citizens, e.g. women and population of poor regions; and
- ix. management of data on skills in demand for foreign employment and skill development.

2. Protection and welfare of emigrant workers and their families

Six challenges were identified under this Policy pillar that can be grouped into three major issues:

- x. the protection of rights of workers while abroad to primarily address contractual violations/abuse of power by overseas employers;
- xi. lack of support mechanisms for the emigrant workers family members residing in Pakistan, particularly admission of their children in educational institutions, and protection of their properties; and
- xii. non-availability of any pension scheme or social safety package for emigrant workers.

3. Engagement of Pakistani diaspora and reintegration of returning migrants

Six challenges were identified under this Policy pillar that can be grouped into three issues:

- i. absence of a formal strategy engaging the Pakistani diaspora;
- ii. management of foreign remittances; and
- iii. poor reintegration services for return migrants.

POLICY RESPONSES FOR THE PROMOTION OF SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION

Strengthening of institutions and legislative base

The policy responses assembled under the first sub-component include: (i) an improvement in the 1979 Emigration Ordinance and Rules; (ii) establishment of a Labour Market Research Cell⁷; (iii) strengthening the institution of CWAs; and (iv) revisiting the content and structure of bilateral MoUs signed between Pakistan and CoDs. With these pertinent measures, the institutions responsible for the emigration processes would be in a better position to ensure safe, orderly and regular emigration.

Improving the governance of migration process

To meet the challenges related to the governance of emigration process, the Policy seeks the co-operation of all stakeholders to: (i) help prevent human trafficking and forced labour, e.g. responsible border management; (ii) protect the rights of workers from abusive and fraudulent practices during the recruitment process; and (iii) reduce the cost of recruitment and labour migration and enhance development gains. A pre-departure system will be introduced to provide prospective migrants with a set of standards and certification of required skills to maximise the benefits of the emigration spell. In addition, existing Migrant Resource Centres (MRC)⁸ in Islamabad and Lahore will be strengthened to provide hands-on guidance to potential migrants and return migrants as part of their reintegration process.

Global labour markets and skill development

The Policy records that apart from the traditional destination countries in the Middle East, new overseas markets will be explored for the placement of Pakistani workers, e.g. Europe, Latin America and South Africa. Accordingly, the needs of emerging global markets will be reflected in the training curriculum of National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) and provincial Technical Ed-

⁷ The Labour Market Research Cell will be responsible to analyse the labour market situation globally in order to assess the jobs opportunities for Pakistani workers and skill needs of overseas employers.

⁸ MRCs operate to provide migrants with information and counselling in various areas, such as overseas employment, rights and protection of migrants, access to education systems in other countries, skills development and vocational training programmes in Pakistan. Currently being run by MOPHRD and ICMPD in Islamabad; and the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Department and ICMPD in Lahore, MRCs serve to increase the accessibility to general and definite information on migration to the people of Pakistan (<https://www.mrc.org.pk/en/>).

ucation & Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) to produce skills that are aligned to demand. Efforts will be made to get the cooperation of regional entities such as GCC, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in the field of TEVT for development of common qualification frameworks and equivalency standards.

Coordination with provinces for safe and orderly migration

A major initiative of the Policy for the promotion of fair, orderly and regular emigration is that MO-PRHD will work with authorities at both federal and provincial levels and private sector for investing in information systems and periodic awareness raising campaigns on different risks and opportunities for overseas employment. The profile of potential emigrant workers in terms of their migration capabilities will also be prepared. Public Private Partnerships will be explored at both federal and provincial levels to negotiate with large overseas employers and private recruiters for employment of Pakistani workers.

Inclusive emigration

The Policy has included two major measures to make the emigration inclusive in Pakistan. Firstly, the low emigration provinces, Sindh and Baluchistan, will be encouraged to attract more workers for overseas employment. Additional Protectorate Offices will be opened in Sindh (Sukkur), Baluchistan (Gwadar) and high-migration areas of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to promote inclusive emigration.

Secondly, measures to increase the incidence of safe and fair migration for women should be given due priority. Gender will be mainstreamed within all emigration systems and opportunities managed by the Government, as well as OEPs.

International and regional cooperation

Pakistan is part of regional initiatives to promote fair, orderly and regular emigration such as the Colombo Process, Abu Dhabi Dialogue, SAARC Plan of Action for Cooperation on Labour Migration, and Budapest Process. The Policy shows that the MOPHRD will cooperate with regional countries to exempt migrants from paying visa fees and transport costs by implementing a so-called employer-pays model. The concept of fair cost will be supported at regional and international fora. Pakistan is chairing the thematic group on '*Reducing the Costs for Remittances Transfer*' under the Colombo Process. Through regional cooperation, efforts will be made to reduce the costs associated with remittances transfers.

POLICY RESPONSES FOR THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF OVERSEAS PAKISTANIS

Improvement in support services and consolidation of complaints handling mechanism

Different departments presently handle the complaints received from overseas Pakistanis. The Policy guides that all relevant departments such as OPF, BEOE and Prime Minister's Performance Delivery Unit (PMDU) will coordinate to handle such complaints.

The Policy ensures the protection of life and property of overseas Pakistanis in all provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). This will be done by establishing a dedicated desk in police stations in each district of Pakistan, through a fast track judicial system for overseas Pakistanis, and through special cells located at Supreme Court and High Courts premises for redressal of grievances of overseas Pakistanis. The MOPHRD will work with Provinces (Sindh, KP and Baluchistan) for establishing a commission for overseas Pakistanis, similar to the Punjab Overseas Pakistanis Commission (POPC).

The role of CWAs will be strengthened for the protection and welfare of migrant workers by providing regular and continuous capacity building training to CWAs on various topics, such as counselling, case management, gender sensitivity, return and reintegration. Provision of counsellor services through Pakistan's Missions/Embassies, particularly in GCC countries, will be improved. The welfare promoting dimensions of bilateral agreements will regularly be assessed to tackle enforcement gaps, including contract violations and deception. A monitoring system will be devised to ensure that Pakistan is meeting its commitment under the Sustainable Development Goals, and international conventions and standards that it is signatory to in terms of protecting its workers abroad.

Improving labour and welfare standards through participation in international and regional initiatives

MOPHRD shall take a leading and proactive role to negotiate jointly with Asian labour-importing countries over labour and welfare standards of migrants as well as redressal mechanisms.

Enhancing outreach of OPF to serve better migrant workers' families

The outreach potential of OPF will be enhanced to serve migrant families better. OPF will also coordinate with the concerned federal and provincial authorities to accord priority to cases/complaints of overseas Pakistanis referred to them. Existing housing schemes, health services and educational institutions under the auspices of OPF will be strengthened and new, innovative and attractive schemes will be established for overseas Pakistanis.

Social Protection for overseas Pakistanis

Policy responses include health insurance for intending emigrant workers and overseas Pakistanis by OPF in coordination with the Ministry of National Health Services, Research and Coordination. In professional educational institutions, some seats have been reserved for the children of overseas Pakistanis. The same will gradually be extended to all public sector secondary, higher secondary and tertiary level institutions. MOPHRD will introduce pension schemes for overseas Pakistani workers through the Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI). Further, an allocation of 10% compulsory quota for overseas Pakistanis in all upcoming housing projects will be launched by public sector organisations.

POLICY RESPONSES FOR ENGAGEMENT OF PAKISTANI DIASPORA IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND REINTEGRATION OF RETURN MIGRANTS

Measures to increase remittance inflows through formal channels and incentives for remitters

The Policy guides that MOPHRD will work closely with the State Bank of Pakistan to streamline public and private sector banking channels to standardise the receipt of remittances from overseas workers and create greater access for families to receive remittances particularly in rural areas. Moreover, the Policy will support cheaper, safer, and faster transfer options of remittances using new technologies, accessible through mobile phones, and by increasing competition among financial sector institutions. MOPHRD will also make efforts to eliminate taxes on remittances in countries of destination to encourage the use of formal channels and reduce costs. Pre-departure briefings will also cater to 'financial inclusion' in the curriculum.

Diaspora engagement in the development process

The Policy shows that all relevant stakeholders relating to overseas Pakistanis, i.e., MOFA, MOPHRD, MOI/NADRA, OPF, BEOE, and Pakistan Missions, will coordinate to develop a Diaspora Engagement Strategy to impact national development. MOPHRD will develop programs for brain gain by engaging overseas Pakistanis in knowledge transfer activities with the cooperation of other institutions such as the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC).

A Talent Hunt Programme, which will target young overseas Pakistanis, will be initiated. Opportunities will be increased for the diaspora to connect them with local Pakistani institutions in order to transfer skills and technological experience and similar. The Policy also guides MOPHRD to coordinate with Pakistani associations abroad for their effective role in boosting the tourism industry in Pakistan. Investment opportunities created and developed by the Government of Pakistan, for instance projects such as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), will be introduced to the Pakistani diaspora.

Reintegration of Return Migrants

The Policy has taken a multidimensional approach for the reintegration of return migrants. As a first step, MOPHRD will take lead to collaborate with the MOFA, MOI/NADRA, BEOE to have access to disaggregated data maintained by Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) at the airports of all categories of returning overseas Pakistanis, including migrant workers, students, visitors, business professionals, etc.

Moreover, OPF will initiate a referral network, which should provide awareness and connect the various institutions together for the provision of services to returning overseas Pakistanis. Programmes geared towards encouraging skilled overseas Pakistanis to return home on a temporary or permanent basis will be designed with attractive financial incentives.

In addition, special job fairs and recruitment drives for returnee migrant workers will be organised to assist them in the reintegration process at home. Support for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), through Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), will also be explored. Efforts to pursue bilateral and multilateral agreements with CoDs for their support in return and reintegration of migrants in Pakistan will also be prioritised.

UNDERSTANDING THE ACTION PLAN

A coherent emigration policy needs to have a sustainable Action Plan outlining key actions pertaining to the implementation process and supported by accompanying timelines, including key national actors that would assume responsibility for a given action.

To this end, the Policy Action Plan has been crafted to address questions concerning policy responses and actions, the executing agency that will carry out the necessary action, followed by the proposed timeline for completion of the action.

The Action Plan maintains three terms of timelines: (i) actions to be taken within a 1 year period are included in the 'short term'; (ii) actions to be taken in 1-2 year period are included in the 'medium term'; and (iii) actions requiring more than two-year period are included in 'long term'.

(A breakdown of the proposed actions, responsible agency and timeline is provided in Figure 2).

Key features of the Policy Action Plan

Short term actions		Medium term actions		Long term actions	
Action	Implementing agency	Action	Implementing agency	Action	Implementing agency
Review and revision of 1979 Emigration Ordinance and Rules	MOPHRD BEOE OPF OEC	Establishment of a Labour Market Research Cell at the MOPHRD	MOPHRD	Improvement of the migration governance process	MOPHRD BEOE
Revisiting the contents and structure of bilateral agreements	MOPHRD MOFA BEOE OEC CWAs	Development of pre-employment, pre-departure and post-arrival orientation mechanisms	BEOE PEOPA Provincial Govts	Prevention of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons	FIA Border control authority MOPHRD
Development of the standard work contracts Foreign Service Agreement (FSA) in Urdu	BEOE	Strengthening and expansion of MRCs	MOPHRD	Abolishing unscrupulous recruitment practices and improving licensing criteria for OEPs	MOPHRD BEOE
Improvement in recording of biometric data of migrant workers as per changing global dynamic	BEOE	Establishment of additional Protectorate Offices in Sindh and Baluchistan and migrant intensive areas in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	BEOE	Reduction in the cost of recruitment (employers-paid)	State Bank of Pakistan MOPHRD
Establishment of a referral network for returning workers	OPF	Formation of commissions in the provinces	MOPHRD Provincial Govts	Ensuring minimum standards for work contracts	MOPHRD BEOE MOFA
Collaborative arrangement to have access to disaggregated data maintained by FIA at the airports	MOPHRD BEOE OPF FIA	Formation of high level Steering Committees	MOPHRD	Development of strategy for engaging the Pakistani diaspora in development processes	MOPHRD OPF

WAY FORWARD

The Policy's section on "implementation and monitoring" sets three foundations: (i) development of a communication strategy to promote awareness and implementation of the policy; (ii) constitution of a high-level committee to monitor the implementation of the Policy; and (iii) regular monitoring of emigration related SDG indicators. Considering these foundations and the contents of the Policy, as a way forward, it is suggested that:

- After the approval of the Policy, the Policy and Planning Unit (PPU) of MOPHRD may be designated as the custodian of the Policy. The PPU may develop a quarterly plan stretched to three years for the implementation of the Policy.
- A high-level committee may be constituted to monitor the implementation of the Policy.
- Most of the measures given in the Action Plan are related to three departments of the MOPHRD - BEOE, OPF and OEC. In this regard, each department may develop a plan of action streamlining activities and timelines.
- The Policy rightly guides MOPHRD to develop two new strategies regarding (i) engaging the diaspora in the development process, and (ii) communication. MOPHRD can reach out to national and international stakeholders for facilitation and support.
- The Policy has given a strong role to MOPHRD to coordinate with other ministries/institutions and provinces, particularly for the following purposes:
 - Improvement in bilateral MoUs;
 - Selection and capacity building of CWAs;
 - Prevention of human trafficking;
 - Controlling malpractices in recruitment;
 - Skill development of intending emigrant workers;
 - Talent Hunt Programs;
 - Inflows of remittances through formal banking channels and their targeted use;
 - Investment models for Pakistani diaspora; and
 - Cooperation of other countries of the region sending workers abroad and CoDs.

In light of the above, MOPHRD requires a dedicated team of professionals to coordinate with other ministries/institutions, provinces and international stakeholders and to take timely the measures suggested in the Policy and its Action Plan. It is also envisaged that additional resources may be required to ensure that innovative initiatives fostered under the Policy can be fulfilled and achieved to the fullest (for instance, establishment of a Labour Market Research Cell, development of pre-employment mechanisms, establishment of more Protectorate Offices, and formation of a Commission in provinces).

IMPROVING MIGRATION MANAGEMENT IN THE SILK ROUTES



Contact Information

For more information please contact:

Silk Routes Regional Office

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)

Gonzagagasse 1, 5th floor

1010 Vienna, Austria

Tel: +43 1 504 46 77

Fax: +43 1 504 46 77 2375

Email: silkroutesfacility@icmpd.org